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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 01646

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SUBJECT: JA'JA'S "CHRISTIAN DECISION MOVEMENT":
RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., MOTIVES, AND OBJECTIVES

REF: BEIRUT 1635

11. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

12. POLOFF MET MARCH 15 WITH LONGTIME CONTACT NAOUM FARAH, DIRECTOR OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS OF THE LEBANESE FORCES AND NOW AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN JA'JA'S "CHRISTIAN DECISION MOVEMENT." FARAH, WHO UNTIL EARLY MARCH WAS ALSO THE OFFICIAL LF SPOKESMAN, REQUESTED THE MEETING.

RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.

13. FARAH STATED AT THE OUTSET THAT THE LEBANESE FORCES (WHICH HE CONSIDERS SYNONYMOUS FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES WITH JA'JA'S "CHRISTIAN DECISION MOVEMENT") HAD BEEN "BOTHERED" BY THE USG STATEMENT ON MARCH 13 CHARACTERIZING EVENTS OF THAT DAY IN EAST BEIRUT AS A "NEGATIVE DEVELOPMENT." HE ALSO EXPRESSED DISMAY OVER STATEMENTS ORIGINATING IN WASHINGTON THAT AMERICAN EMBASSY PERSONNEL WERE BEING EVACUATED BECAUSE OF EVENTS IN EAST BEIRUT. SUCH STATEMENTS, HE SAID, GIVE A FALSE IMPRESSION OF THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND AND THE OBJECTIVES OF THE MOVEMENT.

14. WHILE HE SAID THE MOVEMENT FULLY UNDERSTOOD THE U.S. DECLARATION IN SUPPORT OF "LA LEGALITE," HE COULD NOT CONSIDER RECENT EVENTS A "NEGATIVE DEVELOPMENT." TO THE CONTRARY, HE SAID, WHAT IS HAPPENING IS "VERY HEALTHY FOR THE CHRISTIANS AND FOR THE WEST, STARTING WITH THE U.S." "WE HOPE," FARAH CONTINUED, "THAT THE UNITED STATES WILL NOT CONTINUE TO TAKE FROM THE VERY BEGINNING A HOSTILE POSITION TOWARDS THIS MOVEMENT, A POSITION WHICH COULD JEOPARDIZE THE FUTURE OF OUR RECIPROCAL RELATIONS." "WE WANT TO ENSURE," HE SAID, "THAT OUR RELATIONS ARE EXCELLENT WITH THE U.S., BECAUSE WE CONSIDER THAT WE ARE FIGHTING THE SAME FIGHT, CONFRONTING THE SAME ENEMY."

15. POLOFF RESPONDED THAT, AS FARAH WAS ALREADY AWARE FROM THE DEPARTMENT'S STATEMENT AND FROM CONVERSATIONS EMBOFFS HAD ALREADY HAD WITH MEMBERS OF THE "CHRISTIAN DECISION MOVEMENT," THE U.S. CONSIDERED THE EVENTS OF THIS WEEK A NEGATIVE DEVELOPMENT BECAUSE THEY DIVIDED THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AND UNDERCUT THE PRESIDENT PRECISELY WHEN THEY NEEDED TO BE STRONG AND UNITED TO DEAL WITH THE ISSUE OF POLITICAL REFORMS.

MOTIVES AND OBJECTIVES

16. FARAH INTERRUPTED TO "ASSURE THE U.S. OFFICIALLY" THAT THE MOVEMENT (A) WAS NOT AN ATTEMPTED COUP D'ETAT, (B) WAS NOT DIRECTED AGAINST THE PRESIDENCY OR THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF ("WE HAVE NOT ASKED HIM TO RESIGN."), AND (C) IS AGAINST THE USE OF FORCE AND AGAINST BLOODSHED. FARAH ADDED THAT THE MOVEMENT HAD CALLED FOR, SINCE YESTERDAY, MARCH 14R THE REOPENING OF THE DOG RIVER TUNNEL AND THE BRIDGES WHICH HAD BEEN BLOCKED BY THE "FOLKS FROM THE METN," I.E., PHALANGE MILITIAMEN LOYAL TO THE PRESIDENT. FARAH CLAIMED THAT THESE LATTER FORCES HAD TURNED OVER THESE CHOKE POINTS TO THE LAF AND THAT WITHIN A FEW HOURS TRAFFIC COULD FLOW FREELY

AGAIN.

¶7. AS FOR THE MOTIVES UNDERLYING THE "CHRISTIAN DECISION MOVEMENT," FARAH SAID THAT FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS PRESIDENT GEMAYEL HAS TRIED TO PLAY SIMULTANEOUSLY TWO INCOMPATIBLE ROLES: FIRST THAT OF PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, I.E., OF ALL LEBANESE REGARDLESS OF THEIR CONFESSIONAL AFFILIATION, AND SECOND THAT OF LEADER OF THE CHRISTIANS. THESE TWO ROLES ARE INCOMPATIBLE, FARAH EXPLAINED, BECAUSE, AS CHIEF OF STATE, GEMAYEL IS OBLIGED TO MAKE CERTAIN CONCESSIONS THAT HE SHOULD NOT MAKE AS LEADER OF THE CHRISTIANS.

¶8. FARAH CITED THE SPECIFIC EXAMPLE OF THE MARCH 9-10 BIKFAYYA TALKS WHERE GEMAYEL "FACED FOUR ENEMIES: KHADDAM KARAMI, BARRI, AND JUMBLATT," AND WHERE HE MADE CONCESSION WHICH WERE UNACCEPTABLE FOR HIM TO MAKE AS THE CHRISTIAN LEADER. THERE SHOULD HAVE BEEN, FARAH SAID, A SEPARATE CHRISTIAN REPRESENTATIVE PRESENT SO THAT THE PRESIDENT COULD HAVE PLAYED THE OVERARCHING ROLE OF CHIEF OF STATE.

¶9. FURTHERMORE, FARAH CLAIMED, GEMAYEL'S PLAYING THESE TWO INCOMPATIBLE ROLES HAS STYMIED THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS WITHIN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY. FOR SEVERAL MONTHS, HE SAID, NO ONE IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY HAS DARED TO SPEAK THEIR MIND.

¶10. THE OBJECTIVE OF THE "CHRISTIAN DECISION MOVEMENT," FARAH STATED, IS TO REMEDY THIS SITUATION BY THE FORMATION OF A COUNCIL COMPRISING REPRESENTATIVES FROM ALL LEBANESE CHRISTIAN GROUPS, INCLUDING BOTH POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS. VARIOUS POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE LEBANESE FORCES WOULD BE REPRESENTED ON THE COUNCIL. THE ROLE OF THE COUNCIL WOULD NOT BE MERELY CONSULTATIVE, FARAH STRESSED, BUT ALSO "DECISIONAL." THE COUNCIL WOULD FORMULATE CHRISTIAN POLICIES, AND A REPRESENTATIVE SELECTED BY THE COUNCIL WOULD PARTICIPATE IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE MUSLIMS UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE CHIEF OF STATE.

¶11. FARAH THEN SET FORTH THREE STEPS WHICH GEMAYEL MUST NOT/NOT TAKE: (A) HE MUST NOT ATTEMPT TO USE THE LAF AGAINST THE MOVEMENT BOTH BECAUSE THE LAF WOULD NOT FOLLOW HIS ORDERS AND BECAUSE THE LAF WOULD DISINTEGRATE AND MUCH OF ITS EQUIPMENT WOULD FALL INTO THE HANDS OF THE LF MILITIA. (FARAH CLAIMED THAT GEMAYEL HAD ACTUALLY CALLED ON THE ARMY TO INTERVENE EARLY ON MARCH 13 BUT THAT THE ARMY LEADERSHIP HAD REFUSED.) (B) HE MUST NOT PUSH THE PHALANGE PARTY TO USE WHAT REMAINS OF ITS METN-BASED MILITIA AGAINST THE LF BECAUSE THE LF WILL EASILY CRUSH THEM. AND (C) HE MUST NOT EVEN THINK OF ASKING SYRIAN FORCES TO INTERVENE, BECAUSE IF ONE SYRIAN SHELL STRIKES THE CHRISTIAN REGION GEMAYEL WILL LOSE ALL CREDIBILITY AND THE "CHRISTIAN DECISION MOVEMENT" WILL SIMPLY GAIN SUPPORT

¶12. AS A FOOTNOTE, FARAH ADDED THAT THE RECONCILIATION COMMITTEE CHAIRED BY THE MARONITE PATRIARCH HAD ALREADY MET SEVERAL TIMES WITH JA'JA' AND OTHER FIGURES IN THE MOVEMENT (INCLUDING FARAH) AND THAT IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE COMMITTEE FOUND THE MOVEMENT'S MOTIVES TO BE WELL-FOUNDED AND REASONABLE. RECALLING WHAT POLOFF HAD SAID (PARA. 5) ABOUT THE NEGATIVE EFFECT OF DIVISIONS WITHIN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AT THIS TIME, FARAH SAID THAT HE AND MANY OTHERS IN THE MOVEMENT HOPED THAT THE ULTIMATE RESULT WOULD BE POSITIVE, I.E., A MORE UNIFIED CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY, SURE OF THE DIRECTION IN WHICH IT IS HEADED, AND SOLIDLY BEHIND THE PRESIDENT. HE CONCLUDED BY ASKING FOR U.S. "UNDERSTANDING AND PATIENCE."

¶13. COMMENT. FARAH WENT TO GREAT LENGTHS TO SET FORTH CLEARLY THE MOTIVES AND OBJECTIVES OF THE "CHRISTIAN DECISION MOVEMENT." AWARE OF THE TOUGH REPUTATION (TO SAY THE LEAST) OF THE MOVEMENT'S LEADERS, HE EVIDENTLY WANTED TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THEY HAD WIDE BACKING WITHIN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY, THAT THE MOVEMENT WAS PROCEEDING RATIONALLY AND REASONABLY, AND THAT IT DESERVED U.S. UNDERSTANDING IF NOT SUPPORT.

BARTHOLOMEW